

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9926
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 7949

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, IR
SUBJ: SHAH GIVES WARNING AND PROMISES TO DISSIDENTS
BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

SUMMARY: IN PRESS CONFERENCE AUG 17 WITH IRANIAN EDITORS.
SHAH WARNED THAT HE AND ARMY WOULD NOT PERMIT RECURRENCE OF
1953 CIVIL DISORDER. ON THE OTHER HAND, RECENT DISTURBANCES,
WHICH HE ATTRIBUTED TO ISLAMIC MARXISTS, WOULD NOT HALT
LIBERALIZATION. NEW LEGISLATION AFTER SUMMER RECESS WILL
GUARANTEE FREEDOM OF PRESS, SPEECH, AND ASSEMBLY WITHIN BOUNDS
OF NATIONAL LAWS. HE REAFFIRMED THAT OPPOSITION CANDIDATES
MAY RUN IN NEXT ELECTION BUT DID NOT SAY WHETHER OPPOSITION
PARTIES WOULD BE ALLOWED. HE HAS ISSUED ORDERS BARRING
MEMBERS OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY FROM PARTICIPATING IN BUSINESS
VENTURES OR MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOI OFFICIALS. HE
DENIED RUMORS OF ILL HEALTH. END SUMMARY.

1. ON EVE OF CELEBRATION OF TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF
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1953 NATIONAL UPRISING, SHAH DISCUSSED CIVIL UNREST AND
FUTURE OF LIBERALIZATION PROGRAM WITH IRANIAN MEDIA
REPRESENTATIVES. AFTER REMINISCING ABOUT EVENTS OF AUGUST
1953, SHAH MADE FOLLOWING POINTS REGARDING PRESENT AND
FUTURE:

2. RIOTS ARE WORK OF ISLAMIC MARXISTS. HE CITED NO

FOREIGN POWERS, BUT SAID LOGANS CARRIED BY RIOTERS SHOWED WHO WAS BEHIND THEM. AS IN 1953, COMMUNISTS ARE TRYING TO MAKE IRAN INTO "IRANISTAN", BUT "THE PATRIOTS, THE ARMED FORCES AND I WILL NOT LET THEM EXECUTE THEIR PLOT." WHILE HE TOOK A LONG TIME TO ACT IN 1953, "THE SITUATION IS DRASTICALLY DIFFERENT NOW." HE HAD CONSIDERED RIOTS TO BE PRICE OF DEMOCRATIZATION, BUT " I DID NOT THINK THIS PRICE WOULD BE SO HIGH." COMMUNISTS ARE OFFERING THE GREAT TERROR IN CONTRAST WITH HIS GREAT CIVILIZATION.

3. LIBERALIZATION PROGRAM WILL CONTINUE. FIRST BILLS TO BE SUBMITTED TO MAJLES AFTER SUMMER RECESS WILL PROVIDE GUARANTEES FOR FREEDOM OF SPEECH, PRESS, AND ASSEMBLY. "IT IS YOUR DUTY, AS REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRESS, TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN FREE EXPRESSION AND LIBEL, BETWEEN CRITICISM AND SLANDER." SHAH STATED THAT OTHER CAUSES OF DISATISFACTION MAY TAKE TIME TO CORRECT--FOR EXAMPLE, GOI HAS COMPILED "HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF CASES OF PROFITEERING," AND IT WOULD TAKE TEN YEARS TO DEAL WITH THEM, UNLESS GOI CHOOSES TO WRITE THEM OFF, ON UNDER--STANDING THAT PROFITEERS HAVE LEARNED THEIR LESSON. SHAH EMPHASIZED ECONOMIC PROGRESS AS FULFILLING A HUMAN RIGHT, "THE RIGHT TO HAVE EMPLOYMENT". AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES AND INDUSTRIAL PROFIT-SHARING ARE FURTHER EXAMPLES OF EXPANSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

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4. ELECTIONS WILL TAKE PLACE AS SCHEDULED. OPPOSITION CANDIDATES MAY RUN FOR MAJLES, PROVIDED THYE ACCEPT THE OATH TAKEN BY ALL NEW MAJLES REPRESENTATIVES: "WE ---TAKE GOD AS WITNESS AND SWEAR ON THE HOLY KORAN TO---BE SINCERE AND TRUTHFUL TO HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY THE SHAHANSHAH... AND TO REFRAIN FROM BETRAYING THE FOUNDATION OF THE THRONE AND THE RIGHTS OF THE NATION." SHAH REQUESTED PRESS TO PRINT OATH, ADDING "I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY IF THEY ABIDE BY IT." ASKED WHETHER FURTHER RIOTS MIGHT CAUSE POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTIONS, SHAH LEFT SOME ROOM FOR DOUBT: "I WISH TWO POINTS WILL HAVE BECOME CLEAR BY THE TIME OF THE ELCTIONS: THE FIRST ONE IS WHETHER THE GOVERNEMENT HAS THE POWER TO PRESERVE LAW AND ORDER; TH E SECOND ONE IS THE CODE OF ALL KINDS OF FREEDOM WHICH IS THE FIRST BILL TO BE SUBMITTED TO PARLIAMENT AFTER THE SUMMER RECESS." HE WARNED: "IF, DESPITE ALL THE CIVIL, INDIVIDUAL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES THEY, ARE TO ENJOY... THEY STILL REFUSE TO QUIET DOWN, THEN WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO? I DO NOT NEED TO SPELL IT OUT. YOU CAN READILY COME UP WITH THE ANSWER." (COMMENT: PRESS NOTED THIS COULD MEAN CHANGE IN LIBERALIZATION PLANS BUT SAW IT AS REAFFIRMATION OF GOI DESIRE TO MOVE FORWARD DESPITE HEAVY SLEDDING.)

5. RASTIKHIZ PARTY NO LONGER EXPECTED TO BE PARTY OF ALL IRANIANS. " NOW THAT WE ARE PROGRESSING TOWARDS MAXIMUM ENJOYMENT OF CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES, WE DON NOT EXPECT 100 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION TO JOIN THE RASTIKHIZ." THOSE WHO WISH MAY PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS OUTSIDE RASTIKHIZ. SHAH STOPPED SHORT OF SAYING, HOWEVER, THAT DISSIDENTS MAY ORGANIZE INTO COMPETING PARTIES. ASKED WHETHER WINGS OF RASTIKHIZ MIGHT BECOME INDEPENDENT ASSOCIATIONS, SHAH SAID IT WAS A LIGITIMATE QUESTION WHICH RASTIKHIZ PARTY SHOULD CONSIDER.

6. IMPERIAL DECREE REGARDING BUSINESS DEALINGS BY MEMBERS OF ROYAL FAMILY WAS CONFIRMED AFTER QUESTIONER RAISED THE CONFIDENTIAL

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ISSUE. (EMBASSY COMMENT: COURT MINISTER REPORTEDLY PLANTED THIS QUESTION.). NO MEMBER OF IMPERIAL FAMILY MAY PARTICIPATE IN PUBLIC OR PRIVATE BUSINESS VENTURES OR MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY TO GOI OFFICIALS ON THEIR OWN BEHALF OR THAT OF OTHERS.

7. SHAH'S HEALTH IS EXCELLENT DESPITE RUMORS TO CONTRARY. (EMBASSY COMMENT: CHARGE NOTED SHAH APPEARED FIT AND WELL AT AUDIENCE AUG 13.)

8. ARMED FORCES OF IRAN WILL BE READY IN FIVE YEARS TO DEFEND A NATION OF FORTY MILLION.

END UNCLASSIFIED. BEGONFIDENTIAL.

COMMENT: DESPITE WINNING HEADLINES "NO SLOWDOWN TO LIBERALIZATION" IN TEHRAN JOURNAL, SHAH IMPLIED THAT FUTURE POLICY DEPENDS ON RESPONSIBLE ATTITUDE OF CITIZENRY. HE INDICATED THAT IF NEW OPENNESS IN PUBLIC EXPRESSION AND IN MAJLES ELECTIONS CREATES EXTENSIVE TROUBLE RATHER THAN PROGRESS, HE HAS NECESSARY FORCE TO MAINTAIN INTERNAL SECURITY. AUG. 19 ABADAN THEATRE DISASTER (TEHRAN 7900 NOTAL) HAS STIFFENED GENERAL NATIONAL MOOD ON QUESTION OF VIOLENCE. FURTHER COMMENT WILL FOLLOW.

10. TEXT OF PRESS COVERAGE BEING POUCHED.
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